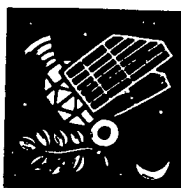


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TECHNOLOGY FOR PEACE  
PART THREE

# THE INSPECTORS

Their job is nothing more than monitoring the world's supply of nuclear fuel. Their intent is nothing less than preventing the spread of nuclear weapons.

BY CARL POSEY

THE MAN FROM Vienna is tense. He has spent an uncomfortable night in a remote corner of this foreign nation, an unfamiliar breakfast will not let itself be digested, and he is preoccupied with rumors that all is not what it seems here. The sight of his destination through a gap in the black trees—the almost windowless gray boxes, the stacks and cooling towers, the domed enclosures where atoms are split for electricity and technical repute—stimulates yet another mental rehearsal of the careful routine the day must follow.

He has gone through it many times before, at places where uranium is purified, loaded into fuel rods, consumed, cooled, or resurrected in another "combustible" form. Whether the plants lie in nations with thousands of nuclear warheads or in nations whose leaders thirst for their first taste of explosive fission, the essence of the routine is always the same. The visitor bears some mild celebrity, for against its instincts, this nation, on this day, relaxes

*Carl Posey's novel Prospero Drill will be published by St. Martin's Press in January. His most recent novel of science and espionage, Dead Issue, was published in England last spring.*

its sovereignty, endures his scrutiny, just for him and for what he represents.

To his host, the operator of this facility, the nuclear safeguards inspector from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Vienna is both colleague and adversary. They share a belief in a nuclear future, but its evolution can make great trouble between them. The nation has known of this inspection for only a month, the reactor operator for barely a week. He shrugs. If all goes well, it can be done in one morning without even shutting down the reactor.

What follows lies at the core of the delicate balance between wars that are largely ritual and wars that are hot. The inspector must verify that the movement and location of uranium in this nation are exactly as the host nation says they are. He is here to prove nothing beyond the presence of a certain amount of nuclear material. It is verification, not detection. "Countries do not submit to safeguards to prevent themselves from doing something," explains Hans Blix, the Swedish director general of the IAEA. "They submit because they have decided that they will not make use of a facility for producing weapons. And this willpower, the political will of a country, is where nuclear nonproliferation resides."